

Sex Trafficking: Victims Unique Experiences and Psychosocial Needs Post Trafficking

A Senior Thesis

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by
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Abstract

Most see trafficking as an international issue because they are unaware that about 50,000 women and children are trafficked into the United States each year according to one study and others contest that it may be quadruple that number. (Holman 2008) The victims of sex trafficking in U.S. society often go overlooked and are labeled as deviant and or prostitutes. Societies rarely takes the time to understand these women and what lead them into trafficking and what factors contributed to them staying in trafficking. This study seeks to better understand sex trafficking from the victims' perspective through qualitative one-on-one interviews with women rescued from trafficking and living in a Midwest City, looking at previous research on sex trafficking and sex work in general, and through applying sociological theory. Findings suggest that each woman's experiences are unique but overall themes do exist and more resources need to be made available to the population including housing, health care, and family services.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my grandmother Velma D Reese and great grandmother Eola Goode, for all the continued love and support over the past 21 years. Thanks you for your guidance, which I have come to learn, has lessened my own vulnerabilities. I love you both and would be lost without you.

Vita

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Chapter One

Introduction

In this chapter, I will identify the research topic and primary research questions, discuss why the topic is sociologically relevant, and explain a sociological theory that helps to better understand the topic.

Statement of the Problem

The trafficking of humans has become what many scholars have identified as modern-day slavery. It has impacted hundreds of thousands of people globally and is a crime that violates the rights of women and children, who are already vulnerable. Sex trafficking is a form of organized crime profiting as much as narcotics and growing in size faster than any other trade system. (Hodge 2008 & Kotrla 2010) Sex trafficking consists of purchase of another person, as personal property. The person purchased is forced to engage in sexual acts for the benefit of the trafficker. Traffickers are those that are buying and trading people, and who are collecting the financial profits. Typically chosen are those with dysfunctional family histories, a lack of education, homelessness, and those that live in poverty-stricken developing countries with limited knowledge of resources to begin living a healthier lifestyle. Victims face mental and physical abuse and oftentimes have no means of escaping the torture.

Purpose of the Study

By examining what led them into trafficking, what caused them to continue with this lifestyle, and how they themselves view their unique experiences, this study will provide a better understanding of the post trafficking psychosocial needs of women to transition back into

society. A smooth transition is defined as support and resources being readily available and accessible to these women. Without this transition these women may turn back to trafficking or even self-prostitution to make a living.

Rationale for the Study

The U.S. is the destination country for some sex trafficking victims, a place to sell their body and make money for their traffickers, and a transit country for others, just one stop along the way to their final destination. Many women and children have been forced into trafficking through threats, violence, and false promises of legal work and a better life. Most see trafficking as an international issue because they are unaware that about 50,000 women and children are trafficked into the United States each year. (Holman 2008) The most recent legislation to address sex trafficking in the U.S. is the Trafficking Violence Protection Act (TVPA). Although TVPA helps prosecute traffickers, attain immigrant status for international victims, and obtain social services for victims, the lack of societal knowledge, funding, and trained authorities promotes slow progress and more efficient traffickers.

A study by Clawson et al (2004) found that 78% of those providing services to victims see lack of resources as a barrier to these victims acquiring assistance, 72% lack funding, and 65% lack adequately trained specialist. Due to the language around trafficking many have a hard time understanding the women as victims instead of prostitutes; therefore, they sometimes face criminal sanctions and harsh treatment instead of beneficial social services and community support. The nature of this form of organized crime, the voices and concerns of victims will continue to go unheard until adequate professionals are trained to combat trafficking and appropriate service providers are available to assist in the victim's re-entry into a healthy environment.

Theoretical Framework

One theory that helps to better understand sex trafficking is Marxist Feminism. Marxist Feminism is a theory of sociology that follows the beliefs of Karl Marx. Marx believed that groups within a social system are constantly in conflict with one another over power. These conflicts are solved through society reorganizing and redistributing goods, labor and power. The continuous change in societies structures leads to birth of new systems such as capitalism. The system of capitalism creates two groups, the proletariat or those who sell their labor in order to make a living and the bourgeoisie, those that own the means of production. The bourgeoisie are constantly exploiting the proletariat by keeping them dependent on them for wages that are low in comparison to the profits they gain from their work. The proletariat continues to work in these conditions with the hope of one day moving up to better positions with more pay and to continue what they believe is a productive well organized society.

This same system of oppression and maximizing profits also creates the stage for degrading women and controlling them. Women are limited to working in the home doing domestic work that is not valued by men and are unable to create capital such as owning property because they do not have the means to success. Women are also restricted because of the process of reproduction, women are forced to take time off of work and other obligations to reproduce and care for children while men do not have the same obligation of care giving and still profit from having the children (preferably sons) to join in the labor process and pass their wealth to. Men are able to create this oppressive relationship with women not only because of capitalism but because men in society tend to hold the power and ability to set cultural standards, and through socialization made to be superior. Therefore when it comes to issues like sex trafficking and prostitution women are once again oppressed and controlled by men to help them gain

capital. A system of capitalism that promotes human greed and labels money and power as most important in society leads people to take desperate measures to achieve status and compete in society, even if it violates the rights of others. Men are buying women in the same fashion that they purchase property, to be owned and controlled in everyday life. For those that may receive money for their work or other accommodations like shelter it is nothing in contrast to the profits traffickers and pimps are making and or the damage it causes to the women's health mentally, emotionally, and physically. This abuse and constant control creates a false consciousness for the women, making them believe that they have no other choices and have no self worth. They are mentally drained, ashamed, scared and lack the self-identity needed to defy their trafficker and escape victimization.

Research Questions

This study will seek to answer three primary questions:

1. How did these women become involved in sex trafficking?
2. What were their experiences?
3. What resources or assistance is needed to keep them from returning to trafficking?

Contributions to the Profession of Sociology

The study of sex trafficking is important to the discipline of sociology because it not only is a crime that is exploiting millions but is constantly growing in size due to different cultures, norms, and social structures in different societies. Victims of sex trafficking are often difficult to locate and help because of the sensitivity of the subject and covert nature of the crime. The women and children involved have become alienated from society because their means of being able to provide for themselves is seen as deviant. They are a group that now must find a way

back into society and it's norms and rebuilding positive productive relationships with people. I think as a sociologist it is important to look at this group and understand why they have continued with this lifestyle they have and what factors within their own life consciously and unconsciously pulled them towards trafficking.

Summary

In this chapter the research topic of domestic sex trafficking was introduced. Resources for victims post trafficking and the their scarcity was discussed, why sex trafficking and helping victims post trafficking is important and what this research means to the field of sociology. To better understand sex trafficking the theoretical framework was presented by applying the sociological theory, Marxist feminism, and the primary research questions are also stated.

Chapter Two

Introduction

In this chapter prior research on sex work, sexual assault, and sex trafficking will be discussed. Information on what other researchers have found to be effective or ineffective with the TVPA and why sex trafficking has become a thriving industry.

Literature Review

When taking a step back and looking at sex work and the exploitation of women in general within the United States, many trends can be seen regardless of the race, education level, or social economic status within the population studied. Society is structured for men to dominate over women and men's masculinity to evolve around sex, so there should be no surprise that the outcomes is sexual assault and sex trafficking. A study on sexual assault and rape at the collegiate level by Armstrong, Laura, and Sweeny found that between 20-33% of women college students are victims of rape or attempted rape each year and 50-75% of the occurrences involve alcohol consumption by one or both parties involved. One must wonder how does this happen?

The study looked at middle to upper class white, female, undergraduate, students at a university and found that these women fall into narrow roles and overall generalizations about what it means to fit in during college. The number one priority besides classes was to gain attention from males. The women would spend hours purchasing new clothes that were "hot" but not "slutty" (one that would show just enough skin), dieting, tanning, and doing their hair all for

the attention of men. Because the dorms often had rules against alcohol and partying women would go out to fraternity houses to meet men and establishing the “in crowd” reputation they were looking for. These parties are male dominated with men controlling the amount of alcohol women are consuming, music, transportation, and when people could come and go. This leads to party rape, a situation in which the girl goes from having fun to being trapped in a coercive situation where she gives in because she doesn’t want to lose her status and or the amount of alcohol she has consumed makes it difficult to make clear judgments. The coercive nature, manipulation, alcohol consumption, and even force that is seen in the sexual assault scene on college campus is not much different from that of a sex trafficking victims experiences with her trafficker and or customers, where women’s identity have become tied into their sexuality and use of alcohol and other substances lead to disastrous situations.

Weitzer is (2009) recent work on contemporary sex work identified two different categories of sex workers, street workers and indoor sex workers. Street workers were those that were found in casinos or bars, and streetwalkers, while indoors workers were those in massage parlors and call girls. Street workers were found to be paid less pay, experience greater amounts of violence and stigma from the community, and have a different type of customer with different expectations than an indoor sex worker. Sex work that takes place indoors is built around the customer living out their fantasy and can be costly, contact between the worker and customer may be for a few hours, few days and sometimes lead to a relationship and or marriage. While street workers on the other hand deal with customers who are looking for quick, short, inexpensive, sex encounters. Research also revealed that customers from indoor sex work had a desire to also please the sex worker through oral sex (17% versus 4%), and kisses, hugs, and caressing (42% versus 3%). I believe one of the biggest issues that can explain the difference

between the two is the type of neighborhood the sex work takes place in, and the social class of the people looking for the services. Weitzer's (2009) research found that customers from both types of sex work identified several reasons for seeking services including 47% wanting the excitement from approaching a sex worker, 43% sought a different kind of sex than they could get with their regular partner, and others wanted to avoid long term obligation, or desired sex with someone they felt was exotic, sexy, of a different race, or transgender. This research will focus on women involved in sex trafficking who have worked as either street workers or indoor workers.

The sex trafficking trade places countries in three categories, those for recruiting (source countries), transit, and destination. Source countries are those where victims are bought and or taken, and transit are countries where further trade may happen and or victims and traffickers travel through. Destination countries are developed and prosperous such as Canada, the Netherlands, Spain, Germany and the U.S., where victims are put to work. (Holman 2008) The U.S. is central to this trade due to its makeup and the level of commerce. It is estimated that there are 50,000 people trafficked annually into America and the Immigration and Naturalization Service discovered 250 brothels throughout 26 US cities. (Tiefenbrun 2002 & Holman 2008) These women are made to believe that they have no other choice in life and experience daily acts of violence, mental abuse, and engage in activities that are a constant threat to their health. Raphael and Shapiro (2002) the researchers behind a study in Chicago about the lives and needs of 222 prostitutes found that many have experienced violence and 21% reported having be raped ten times or more and 22% reported being HIV Positive. Sex Trafficking has become a big industry around the world due to lack of laws to combat it, effective ways to enforce existing laws, and the profits that can be made compared to other forms of organized crime. (Clawson,

Small, Go, & Myles 2004) Unlike in the sell and exchange of illegal drugs products are reusable; women are seen, as products that can be sold over and over again not just once. (Tiefenbrun 2002) It has been found that women can be bought around the world for anywhere between \$15,000 and \$40,000 and in a period of one to six years' make one to eight million dollars for traffickers. (Tiefenbrun 2002) Also in comparison to drug trade penalties trafficking penalties are low. The statutory sentence for involuntary servitude in the US is 10 years per count compared to the maximum for distributing a kilo of heroin is a life sentence. (Tiefenbrun 2002 & Clawson et al., 2004)

An important part of the research on human trafficking is looking at the policies that have been put in place in the United States. The Trafficking Victim Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 has become the newest and most popular legislation for sex trafficking. It has been amended in 2003, 2005, and 2008. Before this legislation there was the White Slave Traffic Act of 1910 also known as the Mann Act. This law banned the transportation of white women and girls for immoral purposes. (Homan 2008) The Act was ineffective due to its vague wording and has now been seen as another facet to the Jim Crow laws. TVPA defines sex trafficking as: a commercial sex act induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such acts has not attained 18 years of age. (Tiefenbrun 2002, Holman 2008, Kotrla 2010, and Hodge 2008) TVPA addresses severe forms of trafficking within the United States and other destinations, aid in prosecuting traffickers, and provide protection for victims. Under TVPA victims of trafficking would be provided access to translation services, safe shelters, social assistance, job counseling, medical care, psychological care, education assistance, and restitution from their traffickers. (Bishop 2003, Homan 2008, & Tiefenbrun 2002)

The Trafficking in Persons Report is also an outcome of the TVPA. It is published each

year and is an assessment of the status of trafficking laws in source and destination countries.

The report divides countries up into three tiers. Tier one is made of countries that have met the minimal standards to discourage trafficking. Tier Two is countries that are not meeting the minimum standards but are making an effort, and tier three are those not meeting the minimums and not making any effort. (Bishop 2003 & Homan 2008) Countries are judged on their prosecution and investigation of trafficking, protection for victims, educating the public on the issues, monitoring immigration patterns for trafficking, and investigating public officials that may be involved in the trade. (Holman 2008) These tiers are significant to countries because those found to be not in compliance risk losing non-humanitarian and non-trade related assistance.

The numerous policies enacted through TVPA to combat trafficking are a stride in the right direction, but like all policies put in place there are some set backs. TVPA seems like a great policy in theory but in reality when put into place hits a lot of speed bumps. The policy creates T-Visa for victims so that they can gain U.S. citizenship instead of being shipped back to their home countries where they may still face hard times. The U.S. has said that they have the ability to grant 5,000 T-Visas a year to victims, who then after three years can apply for permanent citizenship. (Bishop 2003) The problem is that in 2003 the US only issued 172 T-Visas a startling number when looking at the number of victims of human trafficking yearly. The T-Visas also have set strict requirements for victims applying; this includes helping law enforcement with all reasonable requests in the process to prosecute the trafficker (Bishop 2003). Combating trafficking is also difficult because most women are unable to escape and those that do, do not know what resources are available, partially because they are limited. For example for youth who have been involved in sex trafficking there are only four shelters within the U.S. They

are located in New York City, Atlanta, San Francisco, and Van Nuys, California and together only have 45 spaces available. (Kotrla 2010) Therefore most end up in residential treatment centers, child protective service, and correction facilities, all of which cannot provide the support the needed after such traumatizing events.

Summary

This chapter discusses previous research that has been done on sex trafficking, the current statistics and facts of the trade, and the effects of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. It also discusses prior research that has been done on sex work in general.

Chapter Three

Introduction

In this chapter, the research process, the participants of the study, questions asked of participants, and the collection of data and analysis will be explained. Some important terms will also be defined as they relate to the purpose of this study.

Methodology

Following the purpose of the study, information gathered was intended to help to better understand victim's experiences, lifestyles, attitudes, and ways to further assist them. Due to difficulty of identifying and communicating with trafficking victims, the target sample size for this study was 6-10 participants. Although this was a small number the goal was to collect accurate beneficial information for a qualitative study not quantitative. Due to the nature of the research and the specific information I aimed to obtain, participants who self identified as sex trafficking victims. Participants that are U.S. citizens, women, over the age of 18, and speak English, and have been rescued from trafficking and living in safe havens for victims. This study of sex trafficking was a qualitative study with snowball sampling. Data collection began with those most convenient participants i.e. those at a local safe haven located in a Midwest city and expand by referrals to others willing to participate. Data collection consisted of interviewing participants for approximately forty-five minutes to an hour with a set interview guide. The guide was developed based on information gathered from the literature review and the primary research questions. The questions guide is designed to get a better understanding of how the

victims of trafficking view trafficking, their experiences, and their lives now. (see appendix A) This includes any mental, emotional, or physical issues that may have arisen during or after trafficking and any resources they feel they need now including housing, finances, and health care. Interviews were expected to be fluid with participants giving the opportunity to elaborate on answers, skip questions they are uncomfortable with and provide any additional information they feel will be beneficial to the research. During interviews notes were taken and all conversations recorded. Conversations, notes, and all other documentation were kept on a secure password protected computer to protect the confidentiality of the participants. All participants were asked to sign a consent form before participating to ensure participants were well informed about the were used to protect participants and assure no more than minimal risk. To analyze the data found trends and similarities will be looked at and over all themes developed to understand how each category relates to one another.

Re-state Research Questions

This study will seek to answer three primary questions:

1. How did these women become involved in sex trafficking?
2. What were their experiences
3. What resources or assistance is needed to keep them from returning to trafficking?

Measurement of Variables

For the purpose of this research the following terms will be defined as follows:

Human trafficking: the recruitment, harboring, transportation, or obtaining of a person for labor or service, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery

John: A sex worker's client

Sex Trafficking: a commercial sex act that is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such acts has not attained 18 years of age.

Victims: Women 18 years of age and above that have been involved in sex trafficking as defined by TVPA

Resources: Programs, funds, or social workers that help with family, job, education, substance abuse, health care, religious, mental, housing etc.

Summary

In this chapter the methodology of my research on sex trafficking was explained. The research was identified as a qualitative study with snowball sampling and participants that are women age eighteen and older who have been trafficked. The process for data collection and analysis was discussed and important terms were given operational definitions that fit the purpose of the research.

Chapter 4

Introduction

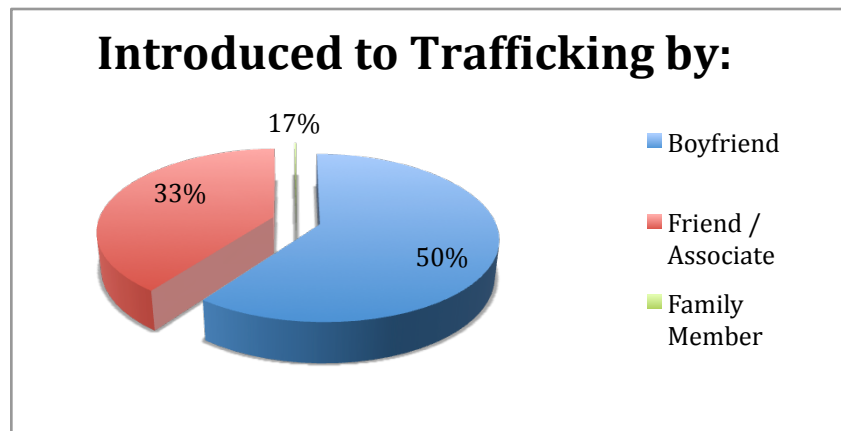
The following results are based on six personal one-on-one interviews with sex trafficking victims who have been rescued from trafficking for two months or more. All names used are pseudonyms to protect confidentiality of the victims, and interviews were completed in person, recorded and immediately uploaded onto a password-protected computer. Responses from participants were then analyzed to identify over all themes, similarities, and differences the results are as follows.

Research Results

All participants were first asked to identify their current age and during what ages they participated in sex trafficking. Most of the women started during their teenage years and on average were involved for six and a half years. Conversations with the women hinted at the fact that traffickers looked for young women because they could bring in greater profits than older women and recruitment by the traffickers was ongoing. As the women began to get older and into their mid twenties, they could easily feel the wear and tear on their bodies that the trade was causing and competition with younger girls owned by the same traffickers seemed to add on unneeded stress. The options open to the women seemed slim, work and work harder, self-prostitution, or find a way out of sex slavery.

Name	Years in Trafficking	Current Age
Star	6 years (16-22)	50
Melissa	10 years (22-32)	24
Chris	6 years (16-22)	42
Marcella	5 years (13-18)	19
Tonya	4 years (21-25)	28
Danielle	8 years (15-23)	29

Three common ways were found that explained how women were introduced to the trade; these included a boyfriend, family member, and friend or associate. This aligned with previous research findings that the trafficker or first person to introduce a woman into sex work is usually someone they are familiar with and trusted. (Raphael & Shapiro, 2002, Weitzer 2009) Danielle explained that she met her first pimp, as she called him, while she was a dancer at a male strip club. She stated that he told her he could make her double the money she made in the club after he got his profit. Star was persuaded by her boyfriend that he needed help paying bills and that having sex with his friends was the perfect way to help him. The customers soon grew from his friends to strangers.



Traffickers had persuaded these women that the lifestyle they would live would be one of glamour and luxuries. Many of the

women expressed believing this because their trafficker had expensive items, fancy cars, and name brand clothes. Five out of the six women originally received nice things as rewards for their compliance with the trafficker's demands, complements, and were just treated nice in

general, and one-day things just changed. Star describes the change, as a sign of trouble that she convinced her self was nothing.

Star: He began to show up at my job when it was time to get off work and picking me up unexpectedly, driving by my mother's house to see if I was home, telling me I was not allowed to have sex with anyone but him or those that he set me up with. I became scared and intimidated but I had no one to tell, and I didn't want anyone to know what I had been doing.

A second common theme that was found within all victims' experiences was feelings of fear, shame, and guilt, instilled in them by the trafficker. This was done through constant threats, physical and verbal abuse, and controlling the women's every move. These feelings kept women from seeking help, and ensured they would lack the self of esteem and identity needed to turn against their trafficker. Three of the participants explained that in order to keep from having to explain behaviors to their parents or family they stopped talking to them completely and when they got the chance moved away. Victims expressed not wanting people to know the lifestyle they had turned to or express sympathy or looking at them as if they were disgusted, because they themselves knew that that they were capable of doing better and being a model citizen. The victims had developed a compartmentalization coping mechanism that allowed them to set aside their formal self and life in order to get through their current lifestyle that was against societies norms. Further into the research process I learned this mechanism aided the women in reconnecting with their families after being rescued and helped them to act as if nothing ever happened.

Tonya: Even though my mom was a social worker I never told her anything. Once I was out of the state I felt alone and constantly doubted who I was, but didn't want to worry my mom. I'm not like all the girls she counsels. I was going to make things work, until the abuse got worst. He threw me into a closet and beat me until I blacked out. After having reconstructive surgery I realized I had let this man rock my world.

Star: I never told my mother what was going on while I was in Vegas. I sent her money monthly and letters about how great things were. When I returned home I continued under the assumption she knew nothing and she passed a few years later.

The third commonality between the experiences of all the women except one (Marcella) was the use of alcohol and drugs, including crack cocaine, powder cocaine, Vicodin, and marijuana. The different substances were used to help victims cope with the different emotions and abuse. Most stated that they used some sort of substance daily and sometimes as frequent as before every john.

Melissa: I used drugs to numb, to not feel, all to make the time go by. One day would turn to the next and then the next and I wouldn't know the difference because I was self-medicating and not sleeping.

Addiction was also an issue that arose from the constant use of the drugs. Three of the women expressed hard times getting off the drugs and also seeking treatment that they found to be beneficial. Star and Danielle admitted to still drinking and smoking marijuana every now and then but felt they were not addicted to the substances.

The final topic discussed was each victims exit from trafficking including how they were able to get out of the trade and what they felt had made them stay in the first place. The overall consensus between the women suggests that they stayed with the trafficker or in sex work because of finances and control. All women in the study expressed that the trafficker often controlled all money that was made from sex with johns and any personal items they needed were purchased by the trafficker and given to them. For those that did receive a profit it was often given as a reward for doing well or because their status with the trafficker was going up. By the trafficker controlling the money girls would never have the means to run away and also feel dependent on traffickers for basic necessities. Danielle explained that she never received money for her self until she became the trafficker's bottom girl. She was then able to have her own spending money, dictate the times she spent working, and the jobs of other girls owned by her trafficker. Star after moving to Vegas was given a monthly allowance as she called it but the trafficker controlled how she spent the money, she would have to wait for him to take her

shopping and approve of her purchases. Melissa on the other hand realized that she would be better off working for her self, and after leaving her trafficker turned to self-prostitution. Star also expressed that after being in trafficking for so long turning to self-prostitution was easy to do when money is low.

Star: I have a part time job but sometimes when I run out of money to pay my bill, I pick up a guy occasionally at a bar or something. During the conversation I'll mention that I'm on hard times and most times the men will express their desire to help me out. We'll leave and go some where....we never talk about how much the sex will be its more of an understood agreement than spoken.

The six women's exiting trafficking experiences were all different but they all agreed that the decision to change had to come from the women and it had to be something that she wanted and was ready to take the steps to start her life over. Melissa had decided to seek a shelter in the city that she was located in after being arrested and serving time in jail. She stated that jail saved her life. Star was able to return home with assistance from her mother after her trafficker was killed and she discovered she was pregnant, and had nowhere to turn. Marcella, who had been confiding in a teacher at her school, was taken from the home where she stayed by child protective services after the teacher felt obligated to report the stories Marcella had been telling her. Danielle saved up money to run away to another city where she had friends. Tonya was saved by her mother who took care of her while she was in the hospital after reconstructive surgery and then moved her back home. Last but not least Chris's sister found her on the streets and checked her into a recovery house close to her home.

The second half of interviews were spent talking to victims about what resources they felt were most needed to assist victims trying to get out of trafficking based on their personal experiences. The four overall areas of discussion included housing, health care, education and occupation services, and family services.

All of the women felt that housing was a big issue for women trying to get out of the trade. They expressed concern that there is currently not enough housing nor enough variability among the types of housing. The majority believed that different types of housing are needed to suit the different needs of victims. There needs to be housing for those that need treatment for substance abuse or mental issues, housing that teach women to become independent, and staff that truly understand the victims and their experiences, people that are willing to take the time to work with the women because the process is one that is not completed over night.

Melissa: Housing needs to make you feel comfortable and like you can relate to the people there, especially in a group home where people need to get along and motivate each other. Rahab Hideaway has become my family¹.

Health care is a significant issue in sex work because of the damage to the women's bodies and the high probability of catching sexually transmitted diseases and diseases and sickness from living on the streets. Becoming pregnant was one of the only times medical attention was sought by the victims because it was the only time a trafficker would allow it. Star, Marcella, Chris, and Danielle all became pregnant during trafficking and had abortions with Star and Marcella keeping the child from their final pregnancy. A few participants also sought medical attention from neighborhood clinic and the health department for things like public lice and gonorrhea. The women found that health care was too expensive most times and the only way to get services was through health departments, going to the emergency room, or having a child to get medical insurance. Melissa when asked if during her time on the streets she ever wanted to seek medical attention and couldn't replied;

Melissa: Plenty of times. I knew that even if I went to emergency, if got bad new, who was going to care for me?

¹ Rahab Hideaway is a safe haven in a Midwest City where Melissa resides. It is the organization she used to get out of trafficking after she was released from jail and still works with the program for personal issues and to help other women.

Overall the women felt a better way to address the needs of the sex trafficking victims was to develop clinics specifically for sex workers to address their needs or have open clinic hours where women could receive vouchers to use in case of future health issues.

Educational and occupational services were also discussed with victims to get a better understanding of what types of programs would help victims get integrated into society.

Programs to help the women gain an education to feel better about themselves and assist with finding a career or programs that focus specifically on job placement and skills that will make them money. All six women thought that programs that do both should be offered because each woman may be looking for something different. Melissa also stated that these programs would only be beneficial after treatment for other issues like stress were addressed.

Melissa: Programs are good but sometimes they are mentally too soon. I signed up for school several times mainly for the money, but the stress from the work only triggered my addictions again. We need rest before anything.

Last but not least victims were asked to discuss their current relationship with their families including children. They were asked to talk about what types of services would help with making the relationship with their families stronger and aid in explaining their experiences to them if they choose to do so. All the women thought a program that allowed families to talk openly about their feelings with a mediator would be ideal. A program that created different activities around communication and loving one another would be great for the victims and family members to reconnect and get a better understanding of one another. Melissa during the interview recalled a time where she actually went to confide in her mother and was turned away.

Melissa: My family and I were never close. When I told them about my addiction and problems they didn't understand. I was during hard dope and my mom said, "Couldn't you just be an alcoholic?"

The Conclusion

After completing all six interviews it became easy to see that although each victims' experience with sex trafficking is unique, many of the emotions felt, abuse encountered, and factors that played into one's entrance and exit with trafficking are similar. Victims have entered into the trade through someone they knew including a family member, boyfriend and or associate. The prior relationship leads the women to initially trusting the trafficker and abiding the trafficker's orders. The trafficker's characteristics, demeanor, and appearance initially leads the women to believing promises made to them. Until the violence starts and restrictions are placed on the women's movements and relationships with others. Many of the victims are offered help numerous times or have tried different programs but realize that transformation can not happen until they are ready to face the battle no matter how difficult it might be. Many of the women are separating themselves from friends and family out of feelings of both shame and pride. They do not want people treating them differently or making them feel worse than they already feel. The research also concludes that victims feel more resources need to be developed and that information about the resources needs to be made easily available to the women. Many victims also spoke about the possibility of churches being a great resource for those that are religious or non-religious if the people in the church could be more understanding and not judgmental. My personal opinion is that the resources that these women are requesting may be easier to develop and gain support for by continuing to educate the public and the communities in which we live. It is important for people to understand how societal rules and labeling has made these people victims whose circumstances and cries for help go overlooked. I think Danielle alluded to this same point when she said: "Please press the issue of education, people

will pass by young girls on the streets without giving it a second thought and they really don't know their story. We need to be wary of what goes on around us.

Looking into the experiences of sex trafficking and the resources needed has by far been no easy task. Due to the nature of the trade and instability of the population recruitment was difficult, even when going through a safe haven for victims. The availability of participants for the study would change daily. One moment there may be six women ready to tell their story and the next day one or two. This caused the sample size to be smaller than expected but the information gathered I believe is no less valuable.

Based on the research result presented further research in the area of sex trafficking that looks at bigger sample size would aid in gathering information that could be generalized to the overall population of the United States. Eligible participants should be open to include those from different cities and those not living in safe havens or rescued from trafficking. Also research that involves getting information from not just victims, but also traffickers, and those that offer resources to victims would provide informative results that create a full picture of sex trafficking. This will help with providing more information to educate the public, create better resources, and aid in finding an approach to combat trafficking all together.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide

How did you get into trafficking?

- When did you get involved?
- How did you get involved?
- Why did you continue with the process?
- Who was involved?
- Personal Experiences
 - What did your average day consist of ?
 - Where did you stay?
 - Was there abuse?
 - by pimp
 - by by customers
 - by others, other women involved
 - how often?

Housing

- Do you feel people continue with trafficking to have a roof over their head?
- Do you feel there is adequate housing for those rescued?
- What type of housing do you prefer or would say is best for those rescued?

Mental Emotions

- Have you developed any mental issues from trafficking?
 - depression

-lonely

-anxiety

- Are you seeking treatments for any of them?
- What emotions did you experience while involved in trafficking?
- What emotions have you experienced since being rescued?
- What would help you conquer these emotions?

Health Care

- Do you feel adequate health care is available?
- Do you feel affordable health care is available?
- In the past 6 months have you wanted to seek medical attention and couldn't why?

Financials

- Do you currently have a way of making a living?
- How much did you make on average day during trafficking?
- was this enough money to afford your basic necessities?
- What do you currently need money for?

Occupation/Education

- Do you think there should be programs to help victims with gaining work skills and getting back into school?
- What type of occupations training do you think would be best?
- Would you be interested in going back to school?

Family including children

- Do you have kids?
- Where are they now?

- Do you have family that you are close to?
- Does your family know about your experiences?
- Is there some type of support to help you reunite with family?
- Is this support effective?
- What type of support or program would be better?

Substance Abuse

- While in trafficking did you use drugs? (Alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, prescription pill, etc.)
- Did using substances make it easier to cope?
- Do you still use any of these substances?
- Is it a problem of addiction?

Spiritual Connection

- Would you consider yourself religious?
- What religion do you most affiliate with?
- How often do you attend religious service or take part in religious activities?
- While in trafficking did you rely on your religion to make it through?
- How has your religion played a role in your experiences?
 - Feeling of being ashamed or looked down upon
 - Looking to god for answers?
 - Used the church as a resource of help?